Removing Barriers to Work for People With Disabilities

People with disabilities can and want to work. A recent study survey of unemployed, working age Missourians with disabilities found that 51 percent would like a paying job. When people with disabilities work, they do better—and so does Missouri. This can be achieved by removing barriers to work by improving Ticket to Work Health Assurance Program (TWHA).

Current Barriers to Work
- Many people with disabilities who can and want to work need some help with essential daily activities such as dressing, bathing or meal preparation.
- People with personal care needs can only access these supports at very low-income levels, which limits work opportunities for people with disabilities.
- Personal care services are not covered by private health insurance.
- Of the estimated 836,153 working age Missourians with disabilities, only 206,530 are employed.

Improving Economic Self-Sufficiency
- Missouri’s Ticket to Work Health Assurance Program is the only program that allows people with disabilities to access personal care services while working.
- Program eligibility should be changed to encourage more people with disabilities to work and increase earnings.
- Missouri should increase the income eligibility criteria for this program so individuals will not be discouraged from advancing their careers for fear of losing personal care.
- Missouri should not count a spouse’s income, up to $50,000, when determining eligibility.
- Missouri should not count retirement accounts when determining eligibility.

Success in Other States
- As of 2015, 46 states have implemented a program like Missouri’s Ticket to Work.
- Washington State participants reduced dependency on the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) by $217–$300 per month.
- New Hampshire evaluators calculated the aggregate earnings of its participants as $11 million more than what would have been in the state’s economy without the program from 2002 to 2006.
- Kansas has calculated that, between 2003 and 2006, participants sharply increased the amount of state income taxes from an average of $74 in 2003 to $123 annually in 2006.
- According to a 2010 national study, 40 percent of participants have increased their earnings.

Recommendations
The Missouri Legislature should support SB 629 to improve the Ticket to Work Health Assurance program to allow more Missourians with disabilities to achieve greater economic self-sufficiency.